

March 12, 2017

Good Afternoon Co-Chairs: Senator Boucher, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Lavielle and other members of the Education Committee. My name is Brian Cristofalo, I live in New Milford, Connecticut. I am in support House Bill 7254: An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia.

Our Special Education Teachers should receive the required training that will support all struggling readers. HB 7254 calls for a "Program of Study" in Dyslexia, for Special Educators within Institutes of Higher Education, which is needed. I was amazed to find out this was not already a requirement. Districts should not have to pay for this training, this should be taught in college.

HB 7254 aligns teacher preparation for special educators with evidence-based structured literacy, along with a requirement for supervised practicum hours, which is critical. This has been proven to work with Dyslexic students and all struggling readers.

HB 7254 will allow special Education teachers to receive Dyslexia training as pre-service teacher candidates, before they graduate and reach our local school districts. HB 7254 is essential to meet the critical needs of students with Dyslexia.

My Brother has Dyslexia, he was not identified until High School. He hated going to school and ended up dropping out early. He went straight into the Army. He was deployed to Iraq. His story did not end well.

My niece was identified as having Dyslexia in first grade. She is now in 4th grade and the achievement gap between her and her classmates is a couple of years. As the workload intensifies, so does the achievement gap. Why? Why in this day and age when the research has been done is this happening? Special Education teachers provide the Intervention to Dyslexic students, why don't we require that they be trained on the most prevalent language based learning disability they will encounter? Why do parents have to beg for program of study in Dyslexia that should be required within Higher Education? This should be a requirement! What is more costly to the state this requirement for Special Education Teachers or the cost of an outplacement? As a resident in the State of Connecticut, I request your support of the Dyslexia legislation as it is stated in HB 7254.

Respectfully,
Brian M. Cristofalo
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